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SUBJECT: ELECTED OFFICIALS REACT TO PUBLIC PRESSURE FOR IMPROVED
SECURITY

REF: A) MEXICO 2682; B) MONTERREY 414

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11. (SBU) Summary. On August 30 a large demonstration took place in Monterrey (as did in Mexico City and dozens of other cities) designed to pressure state and local authorities to improve public security. The citizens marched to demand better performance from the police and to encourage people to report crime. In the wake of this protest march, the state and local authorities have responded with a variety of measures, including additional arrests, passage of a new security law, and holding a national anti-kidnapping conference. Moreover, on September 17 President Calderon helped inaugurate a new police command and control (C4) facility in the wealthy suburb of San Pedro. Although these initial steps are positive, poloff's conversations with ordinary citizens reveal continued widespread skepticism of the police. End Summary.

12. (U) On August 30 there were a series of citizens marches throughout Mexico to demand better public security, led by Mexico City, but including many other cities such as Monterrey (see reftel A). Although there have been fewer drug related executions in the state of Nuevo Leon in 2008 than 2007, there is a climate of fear and impunity as even small businessmen worry about kidnapping and few people have any confidence in the local police (see reftel B). The Monterrey citizens march was non-partisan, and included thousands of people who filled the plaza in front of the Governor's palace. According to a poll of the marchers, 47% of them attended to force the authorities to improve security, 27% in solidarity with the victims, and 14% to say 'enough' to crime. The demonstrators demanded that the Nuevo Leon Governor make security a priority (by working on it at least 3 hours per day), restructure and clean up the local police forces, and encourage people to report crimes. The marchers demanded results within 60 days, and followed up with meetings with state and local authorities.

13. (SBU) Subsequent to the march, Nuevo Leon state and municipal authorities scrambled to prove that they are taking the security situation seriously. Public officials cited a number of actions, some new and some of already in the works, to comply with public demands. Moreover, Nuevo Leon Secretary of Public Security Aldo Fasci acknowledged the seriousness of the problem, publicly admitted that half the municipal police forces had been infiltrated by narcotics traffickers.

-- The police have arrested several criminal gangs, including a kidnapping gang led by an active AFI agent (just before the march), a kidnapping gang in the town of Allende, just south of Monterrey, and a group of burglars specializing in safe boxes.

-- State officials announced an academic will evaluate state police forces. (However, it was subsequently revealed that the academic was already employed as director of the state police academy.)

-- Arranging training for Aldo Fasci and Nuevo Leon Chief of Staff (and possible PRI candidate for Governor in 2009) in Colombia on developing intelligence for anti-kidnapping units.

-- The state of Nuevo Leon hosted an Attorneys General's Conference in Monterrey, including participation from Procurador General Medina Mora, the armed forces procurador, and the attorneys general from each Mexican state. The goal of the conference was to lay the groundwork for the national attorney general's office to : a) develop an anti-kidnapping unit in each Mexican state within three months, and b) allow these units to receive special training, higher salaries, and bonuses when they catch kidnapping gangs.

-- After several months of partisan bickering, the Nuevo Leon legislature passed a new security law, which creates a new metropolitan police force 'metropol' with uniform standards and services and a citizens council to oversee the police. The statute requires state police to have a high school education, and seeks to professionalize the police by creating one state police academy.

14. (U) Meanwhile, on September 17 President Calderon, accompanied by federal Secretary for Public Security Genaro

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Garcia Luna, traveled to Nuevo Leon to open a new anti-crime command, control and communication network (C4) in San Pedro, a facility which is designed to permit better police coordination and facilitate catching criminals. San Pedro has already installed 140 cameras on major streets, plans to install 2,000 cameras within six months, and has added new police patrols. The state of Nuevo Leon has also been building its own C4 center (with the U.S. company Northrop as one of the contractors), but has experienced months of construction delays and the facility is not expected to open until 2009. Speaking to the local business and social elite in his address at the San Pedro event, Calderon struck a strident tone, calling the establishment of greater security both his -- and the Mexican government's -- highest priority. Coming on the heels of the September 15 grenade attack in Morelia, Calderon challenged all levels of government to end ('punto final') impunity and bring both the traffickers and organized crime to justice.

15. (SBU) Comment. Most observers see the citizen march and the steps taken afterwards as positive signs. One British diplomat here noted that the citizen marches in Dublin marked the beginning of the resolution of the crisis in Ireland. However, based on Poloff's conversations with businessmen and ordinary Mexicans alike, they have very little confidence in the police and people are skeptical that there will be real change. Indeed, gaining citizen involvement in the march was difficult. According to one of the leaders of the march, the organizers canvassed leaders of civil society and business associations but found they were scared to become involved. It was the ordinary citizens who were afraid of kidnappings and insecurity that made the march work. As for the San Pedro C-4 center, one prominent industrial leader noted to conoff that, notwithstanding the hi-tech cameras, the potential weakness of the system is the operator behind the screen -- i.e., would poorly-paid monitoring personnel alert their superiors to suspicious movements on just

cover such activities up. Civil society will need to continue to press the state and local authorities for there to be real improvements in public security. Post will continue to follow the issue closely. End Comment.

WILLIAMSON